

Minutes of the Library Advisory Committee (LAC)

For the Montgomery County Public Library at the

Montgomery County Correctional Facility (MCCF)

In Boyds, Maryland

For January 26, 2018 (approved February 5)

The meeting was called to order at 11 A.M. by the LAC Chair, Katharine Lorr. Also in attendance were LAC members Mier Wolf, Richard Lorr, and James Donaldson, the MCPL Acting Assistant Director, Collection and Technology, Tanner Wray, Liaison to the LAC for the Montgomery County Library Board, Denise Habib, the Acting Library Manager at MCCF, and Ethelbert Miller, poet and member of the public.

A reading of the minutes of the December 4, 2017, meeting, and any discussion of the Financial Report, the Acting Library Manager's report, and the Library Board's liaison' report were waived and the minutes were approved.

Membership Report. Mier Wolf and Kathy Lorr reported that progress had been made in securing additional and diverse membership for the LAC. Minister Tim Warner, who has an interest in working with inmates, and is from the Clarksburg area and Patricia Hulsebosch, a career educator, from the Silver Spring area, have agreed to join the LAC. At Ethelbert Miller's suggestion the LAC members expressed their receptivity to inviting poet Zaina Azzam to join the committee. Interest was also expressed in inviting former inmate library workers to join the LAC. Denise Habib thought there was a MCCF requirement that former inmates be released from the MCCF a minimum of two years before they could serve as prison volunteers. Denise also noted that she would not be permitted to contact former inmates, but she agreed that Gail Starkey, the Deputy Warden, Inmate Services, probably could contact former inmates and she volunteered to explore the issue with her.

Acting Library Manager's Report. James Donaldson noted that there might be a delay in appointing a permanent MCCF Library Manager because of the hiring freeze announced by Montgomery County. James said that he had submitted a request to exemption from the freeze in order to begin recruiting a senior librarian (to fill the Library Manager's position at the MCCF). He has written a position description for the position and is hoping to conduct a national search for a librarian with specific skills and background as a correctional librarian. He will also inquire about whether DOCR is interested in filling a second part-time library staff vacancy at MCCF, in hopes of being able to maintain a full complement of workers, a full-time senior librarian and two part-time staff.

Library Board Liaison Report. Tanner Wray reported on his role with the Library Board. The Library Board has a dozen members and each member, in addition to their regular duties, performs as Liaisons to two or more LAC's. In addition to being the Board's Liaison to the MCCF LAC, Tanner is the Director of College Libraries and Information Services for Montgomery College Libraries. He noted that the Library Board meets 11 times a year to advise the Library Director. The Library Board, the LAC's and

the Friends of the Montgomery County Library meet two times a year to discuss common interests in supporting the Libraries. All Library Board meetings are open to the public. It was noted that as members of an LAC, we are part of the county committee structure and are subject to rules applicable to Montgomery County. Thus, for example, LAC meetings must be publically announced and open to the public, and LAC members may not use social media when functioning in their official positions.

Agenda Business. The Committee decided to hold quarterly meetings in February, April, September and December at the MCCF. The next meeting will be held on February 5 at 10 AM. It was agreed that, after the February meeting, the best time for these quarterly meetings is between 11 am to 1 pm on the second Monday of the month. It was noted that the MCCF can only permit four meetings a year at the facility, so the LAC will consider other sites (and if necessary) other times for additional meetings to continue its work. Denise said that she would not be permitted to attend meetings held outside the jail, but that Deputy Warden Starky could. It was also noted that the times of proposed meetings, proposed agendas, and minutes of past meetings must be published on the Library's web site. These materials should be emailed to Regina Holyfield-Jewett (Regina.Holyfield-Jewett@montgomerycountymd.gov), who supervises central administrative aids for the library. Tanner volunteered to send the information relating to the September and December meetings to Regina.

Mier volunteered to be the LAC's Secretary, starting with the February 5 meeting.

There was not time to discuss or create a list of programs at the jail so that library programs would not overlap. This discussion will be deferred to the next meeting.

New Business. Thoughts on the Poetry Program. Members of the Committee were enthusiastic about the success of the Poetry Contest that was held just prior to the LAC meeting. Over 40 inmates participated in the contest by writing poetry. Inmate attendance and interest at the event were judged to be high and the involvement of MCCF staff was cooperative and effective. Ethelbert Miller and Mier officiated at the ceremony, making opening remarks. Ethelbert called each of the three winning contestants and gave them the opportunity to read their poem. There is strong support among those who attended to have the poetry competition continue. Since participation was high, the program could not be held in the library, and were held in the Multi-Purpose Room across the hall. Unfortunately, the acoustics make it difficult to hear and there were several suggestions to improve the event, such as reconfiguring the microphone settings and moving the podium closer to the center of the room. Tanner suggested that there should be an opportunity for the inmates reading their poems (or others listening to the poems) to make remarks reflecting on the impact of the poems. The suggestion that guards might also be involved in making remarks about the poems and was countered by the observation that such interaction might constitute unacceptable fraternization between guards and inmates. Ethelbert suggested how the opportunity for inmates to express themselves might not be limited to the spoken word, but could also include some type of performance art. It was also suggested that non-winners might like an opportunity to read their poetry or engage. Questions were raised about the possibility of a Q & A format for further exploration of ideas expressed in the poems. Richard Lorr suggested that as part of the program, poets could be invited to help teach the inmates about poetic techniques (similes,

metaphors, meter etc.) as a resource for the inmates to use when writing their poems for the contest. It was suggested by a number of LAC members that the MCCF library should maintain a binder or book of the poems submitted or read, although it was acknowledged that there could be a need to obtain a waiver from the inmate writers before this could be implemented. In this connection, it was observed that an organization called Montgomery History might be interested in any book of inmate poetry.

Minutes prepared by Richard Lorr,
Secretary Pro Tem,
January 27, 2018